



HFSC's Client Services/Case Management Division Is Internationally Accredited

June 11, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The International Association for Property and Evidence (IAPE) has awarded accreditation to the Houston Forensic Science Center's Client Services/Case Management (CS/CM) division. The accreditation was granted on June 7, almost 10 months after the process began.

The accreditation helps HFSC ensure its standards for evidence handling and management are of the highest quality.

"I think that having a division whose responsibility is to transport the evidence to and from the laboratory and holding that division accountable for the validity and integrity of the evidence is paramount to the reputation and success of the lab," Ashley Henry, CS/CM's manager, said. "Establishing policies and procedures and having a standard that holds you accountable for that ensures the trust of the public/stakeholders."

To achieve accreditation, CS/CM had to prove the intake, processing practices and management of evidence at HFSC met IAPE's professional standards and criteria. Ms. Henry and her team worked to implement the necessary changes to meet accreditation requirements.

To continue meeting accreditation requirements, HFSC will be more stringent about how evidence is handled and the quality of what is accepted.

Evidence must be clearly identified and properly packaged and handled. Requests for analysis will be rejected if items do not comply with the new requirements.

“We have already started working with HPD and others to help ensure their understanding of the requirements,” said Dr. Peter Stout, HFSC’s CEO and president.

Additionally, CS/CM staff will begin monthly audits of evidence storage and firearms safety training.

Texas law does not require CS/CM accreditation, but HFSC believes accreditation provides a minimum threshold of oversight to help ensure its work is reliable. It is HFSC’s goal to far exceed accreditation standards.

“While we are always looking to improve the scientific aspects of our work, evidence handling is one of the most critical things we do,” Dr. Stout said. “Having third-party oversight over our evidence handling improves our work product.”

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government. HFSC operates in seven forensic disciplines.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Ramit Plushnick-Masti

Director of Communications/PIO

media@houstonforensicscience.org

<http://www.houstonforensicscience.org/>

713-929-6768 (office)

713-703-4898 (cell)

Follow us on Facebook <http://on.fb.me/1x1zap2>

Follow us on Twitter <https://twitter.com/HoustonForensic>